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# Scientists and Astronauts

American women have made significant contributions in many fields of science and they have become very important leaders in the exploration of space.

## Maria Mitchell (1818–1889)

Maria Mitchell was born on the island of Nantucket in Massachusetts. She attended schools on the island and became very interested in studying the stars, a pursuit encouraged by her father. By the time she was 16, Maria had worked as a teacher and opened her own school. Later, she worked in a local library during the day so that she could study the sky at night. In 1846 Maria discovered the orbit of an unknown comet. The discovery earned her respect in the European and American scientific communities.

Maria became the first woman elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1848. Years later, a group of civic-minded American women gave her a large telescope to use in her studies. Maria became the director of the observatory and a popular and influential professor of astronomy at the newly created Vassar Female College in 1865. She studied the planets with her students for 23 years before she retired in 1888.

## Margaret Mead (1901–1978)

Margaret Mead was born in Philadelphia and graduated with her Ph.D. degree in anthropology from Columbia University in 1929. She made a celebrated trip to Samoa in 1925 where she spent two years observing the development of native children and adolescents. She published *Coming of Age in Samoa* in 1928, a book that challenged

American concepts about child rearing and which introduced the science of cultural anthropology to a wider audience.

In later works, Margaret contrasted growth and development among several primitive societies in New Guinea and the western Pacific, as well as among Native Americans. She also wrote books on American culture, cultural changes in societies, and sexual development. She became a widely read and highly respected social critic. Mead worked at several universities and was associated with national and international societies devoted to mental health, science, and anthropology.





## Artists and Writers *(cont.)*

### Marian Anderson (1897–1993)

“A voice like hers is heard only once in a hundred years!” exclaimed Arturo Toscanini, one of the greatest orchestra conductors of all time. The voice he was describing belonged to Marian Anderson, an African American singer from South Philadelphia who rose to the top of the classical music world despite intense racial discrimination. Marian started singing in her local church when she was six years old and soon learned to sing bass, alto, tenor, and soprano parts.

Her congregation raised money for her to study with a music teacher in her late teens. When she was 19, she was able to study with one of the great music teachers in the world. She worked with him for over 20 years. She performed in some American venues, but her greatest success came when she went to Europe to sing and learn the languages in which most operas were written. She built a reputation as a superb classical singer in Germany, Norway, Austria, England, and other countries.

On her return to the United States, she performed in several successful concerts. In Washington, D.C., she was refused permission to sing in Constitution Hall by the owners, the Daughters of the American Revolution, because of her race. Even the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt had no effect. So she sang on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and drew a crowd of 75,000. In 1955 Marian Anderson became the first African American to perform with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York City. She retired from singing after a nationwide tour in 1965.

### Maria Tallchief (1925–present)

Maria Tallchief was born on an Osage Indian reservation in Oklahoma and, as a young child, studied piano and dance in Los Angeles and Beverly Hills. She joined a ballet company directed by the famous George Ballanchine, whom she married in 1946. The next year she joined the dance group that later became the New York City Ballet. Maria is generally considered the most accomplished American-born ballerina and was the prima ballerina of the company in the 1950s. She has worked with a variety of ballet companies since her retirement from the New York City Ballet in 1965.

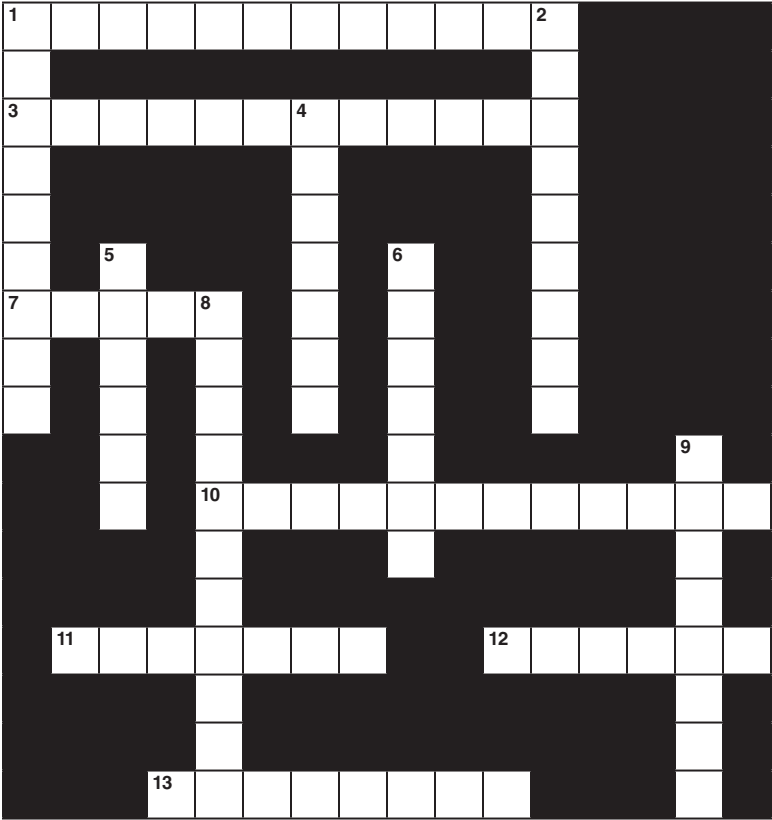




# Crossword Puzzle

**Directions:** Complete the puzzle using the word list and the definitions below.

<b>Word List</b>		
abolitionist	feminist	seminary
amendment	legislature	sojourn
custody	patent	suffragettes
emancipation	protest	tenements
equal	Quaker	



**Across**

- 1. a person strongly opposed to slavery
- 3. the freeing of slaves
- 7. to have the same rights
- 10. women who fought for the right to vote
- 11. to have legal control of
- 12. ownership rights to an invention
- 13. a private school for young women

**Down**

- 1. a change to a law or the Constitution
- 2. housing for the very poor
- 4. to organize against a law or condition
- 5. a member of a religious group opposed to slavery and war
- 6. to stay temporarily (v.)
- 8. a group of lawmakers in a state or country
- 9. a leader for women's rights

1750

1800

1850

1900

1950

2000

# Celebrate Women's History Day

If possible, set aside one day to be devoted to activities related to your study of American women. You might call it Women's History Day. Try doing this activity with two or three classes at the same grade level. This allows you to share some of the responsibilities and provides a special experience for the entire grade level. (Note: These activities can be done independently of a special day.)

## Costumes

Encourage each girl to dress in a costume that reflects the famous American woman that she chose for her research project. The boys should come as the relatives, friends, or famous men they researched when doing the project.

## Parent Help

Encourage as many parents or older siblings as you can to come for all or part of the day to enjoy the proceedings and to help set up and monitor the activities. This is truly a day involving the family in the educational process. It helps to survey parents ahead of time to discover any special talents, interests, or hobbies that would be a match for specific centers.



## Notes on Planning Centers

- The centers you set up should relate in some way to the history of American women.
- Centers should involve the children in doing an activity and often in making something they can take or put on display.
- The class should be divided into groups with about six or seven students per group.
- Each center should take about 20 minutes. Students can then rotate to the next activity.
- The following suggestions will get you started. You will want to add any others for which you have special expertise.

## Doing Portraits

Each student should do a portrait of one extraordinary woman. You will need to have pictures available of many of these women for the students to copy. You might also have your girls in costume serve as models of these women while other classmates do their portraits. You will need 9 by 12 inch pieces of white drawing or construction paper, dark lead pencils, colored pencils, or colored markers.

## Quiz Show

Have students write questions (with answers) to be asked to individual students or teams in a quiz show format like Jeopardy.

The questions could be done ahead of time and given to the master of ceremonies.

## Dancing

A simple square dance or line dance can be learned or practiced in the 20 minutes allotted for each center. At least one volunteer parent or teenager would be needed as a teacher.